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THE ADVENTURES OF MR. PETER RUFF

By E. Phillips Oppenheim—Delilah from Streatham.

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(Continued from yesterday)

"It was Mr. Spencer Fitzgerald," he said, "a clerk in Howell & Wilson's bookshop, who leapt out of the window of Daisy Villa two years ago. It may be Mr. James Fitzgerald now. Gentlemen of your profession have a knack of changing their names."

"My profession's as good as yours, anyway!" the little man exclaimed. "We aren't all fools in it! My friend Mr. Peter Ruff said to me that there was a young lady whom I used to know who was anxious to meet me again, and would I step round here about eight o'clock. Here I am, and all I can say is, if that's the young lady, I never saw her before in my life."

There was a moment's breathless silence. Then the door was softly opened. Violet Brown went staggering back like a woman who sees a ghost. She bit her lips till the blood came. It was Peter Ruff who stood looking in upon them—Peter Ruff carefully dressed in evening clothes, his silk hat at exactly the correct angle, his coat and white kid gloves upon his arm.

"Dear me," he said, "you don't seem to be getting on very well! Mr. Dory," he added, with a note of surprise in his tone, "this is indeed an unexpected pleasure!"

The man who stood by the desk turned to him. The others were stricken dumb.

"Look here," he said, "there's some mistake. You told me to come here at eight o'clock to meet a young lady whom I used to know. Well, I never saw her before in my life," he added, pointing to Maud. "There's a man there who wants to arrest me—Lord knows what for! And here's Miss Brown, whom I have seen at the theater several times, but who never condescended to speak to me before, telling me not to shoot! What's it all about, Ruff? Is it a practical joke?"

Peter Ruff laid down his coat and hat, and sat upon the table with his hands in his pockets.

"Is it possible," he said, "that I have made a mistake? Isn't your second name Spencer?"

The man shook his head. "My name is James Fitzgerald," he said. "I haven't missed a day at the Shaftesbury Theater for three years, as you can find out by going round the corner. I never called myself Spencer. I was never in a bookshop, and I never saw that lady before in my life."

Maud came out from her place against the wall, and leaned eagerly forward. John Dory turned his head slowly towards his wife. A sickening fear had risen in his heart—gripped him by the throat. Fooled once more, and by Peter Ruff!

"It isn't Spencer!" Maud said huskily. "Mr. Ruff," she added, turning to him, "you know very well that this is not the Mr. Spencer Fitzgerald whom you promised to bring here tonight—Mr. Spencer Fitzgerald to whom I was once engaged."

Peter Ruff pointed to the figure of her husband.

"Madam," he said, "my invitation did not include your husband."

John Dory took a step forward, and laid his hands upon the shoulders of the man who called himself Mr. James Fitzgerald. He looked into his face long and carefully. Then he turned away, and gripping his wife by the arm, he passed out of the room. The door slammed behind him. The sound of heavy footsteps was heard descending to the floor below.

Violet Brown crossed the room to where Peter Ruff was still sitting with a queer look upon his face, and gripping him by the shoulders, shook him. "How dare you!" she exclaimed. "How dare you! Do you know that I have nearly cried my eyes out?"

Peter Ruff came back from the world into which, for the moment, his thoughts had taken him.

"Violet," he said, "you have known me for some years. You have been my secretary for some months. If you choose still to take me for a fool, I cannot help it."

"But," she exclaimed, pointing to Mr. James Fitzgerald—

Peter Ruff nodded.

"I have been practising on him for some time," he said, with an air of self-satisfaction. "A thin, mobile face, you see, and plenty of experience in the art of making up. It is astonishing what one can do if one tries."

Mr. James Fitzgerald picked up his hat and coat.

"I was worth more than five guineas," he growled; "when I saw the handcuffs in that fellow's hand, I felt a cold shiver go down my spine."

Peter Ruff counted out two banknotes and passed them to his confederate.

"You have earned the money," he said. "Go and spend it. Perhaps, Violet," he added, turning towards her, "I have been a little inconsiderate. Come and have dinner with me, and forget it."

She drew a little sigh.

"You are sure," she murmured, "that you wouldn't rather take Maud?"

(The End)

THERE ARE MANY DEMANDS ON ROOSEVELT'S TIME

The Plans of the Various Localities Conflicting.

The members of the Rough Riders organization here are preparing for the entertainment of Colonel Roosevelt during his coming brief visit to the city. There was a meeting yesterday of James C. Goodwin, Captain Alexander, Colonel McClintock and Lieutenant Wilcox in relation to the reception of the colonel here, and it was resolved to ask him to a luncheon on the afternoon of his return from the ceremonies at the Roosevelt dam. The invitation will be extended by Captain Alexander.

It is understood that Colonel Roosevelt on his way to the dam will deliver an address to the students of the Tempe normal school. As to the luncheon, it is thought that will not occupy more than an hour of the time of the distinguished visitor. The luncheon will be similar to that tendered to Colonel Roosevelt by the national organization of Rough Riders on his return from Africa last June, one of

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EXTRAORDINARY BARGAINS IN PICTURE FRAMES

A Delayed Shipment at Balke's Big Curio Store.

This is for the information of those who are interested in picture framing. Balke's Big Curio store has just received a consignment of oval frames in gold leaf, walnut, chestnut, mahogany and rosewood veneer suitable for photographs from cabinet to life size. These frames were ordered for the holiday trade, but the shipment of them was delayed. They will now be sold at the deep cut prices prevailing in the closing out sale. Such frames for so little money were never before offered and will never be offered again. For those who want frames of other shapes and sizes, there is that huge stock of 250,000 lineal feet of molding to select from, embracing all that is new and rich in molding. It is all being offered at cost, some of it at less than cost, and beside there are odds and ends of molding which may answer the purpose of some patrons as well as any other. Such pieces are almost given away. In addition there is at the service of customers the most expert frame maker in the southwest. His services cost patrons of the Big Curio store nothing. They are only expected to pay cost for the molding and the glass used in the frames. The frames will be made while you wait.

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